United Nations A/60/PV.37

General Assembly
Sixtieth session

Official Records

37th plenary meeting
Tuesday, 25 October 2005, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Eliasson ..... (Sweden)

The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

Earthquake in South Asia

The President: On 10 October, I expressed the General Assembly's solidarity with the people of Pakistan and its neighbours, India and Afghanistan, who had been tragically affected by the devastating earthquake two days earlier.

Since then, we have all watched with horror as the full scale and impact of the South Asian earthquake have become clearer. We now know that an area of 28,000 square miles was devastated by the quake; entire towns and villages have literally disappeared off the face of the Earth. More than 50,000 people have been confirmed dead, including a great number of children. A further 75,000 people were injured. One million people are in desperate need of humanitarian assistance, and three million are without shelter. Those figures almost defy comprehension, but the expectations are that the numbers will rise still further.

While Pakistan bore the overwhelming brunt of the disaster, over 1,300 people were killed elsewhere in the region. We stand in solidarity with the Governments and peoples of Pakistan, India and Afghanistan as they continue to respond to the impact of the disaster.

In Pakistan, the needs of the people are enormous and they are urgent. There is a three-week window of opportunity to deliver aid to the mountains before the first snowfall. If that is not done, the grim reality is that there will be a further dramatic rise in the death toll.

The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs has called a ministerial meeting in Geneva tomorrow to review the response to date by the international community. The Secretary-General will be present. I am fully confident that Member States will ensure that they are represented at the appropriate level and that they will make adequate funds available so that the humanitarian agencies can respond as quickly as possible.

In the coming weeks, the United Nations will need to ensure that proper planning for long-term reconstruction is under way. I am sure that the General Assembly will want to play its part in this. But this week our focus must be on ensuring that the basics of survival get to those who need them — to the hundreds of thousands of people who, right now, are huddled together in the cold and dark in the hills and mountains of northern Pakistan. They need winter tents, blankets, sleeping bags, stoves, kitchen sets, fuel, clean water and vaccinations. More mobile health-care teams are needed to administer help to the injured, and they will need food through the long, harsh winter.

This year, the United Nations has responded to a succession of devastating natural disasters, the frequency and intensity of which have been almost unprecedented. The Secretary-General has described the response to the South Asian earthquake as the most challenging relief operation ever faced by the United Nations. Our response to this disaster will be no less

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than a measure of our common humanity. Yesterday we celebrated the sixtieth birthday of the United Nations. Tomorrow, in Geneva, we must show the world what this Organization, and the international community, can deliver.

Agenda item 41

Report of the Economic and Social Council

Report of the Economic and Social Council (A/60/3)

Report of the Secretary-General (A/60/114)

Notes by the Secretary-General (A/60/167 and A/60/397)

The President: In connection with this item, I would like to recall for the members of the General Assembly that, pursuant to resolution 58/316 of 1 July 2004, the Assembly, on the recommendation of the General Committee, decided at its 17th plenary meeting, on 20 September 2005, to consider agenda item 41 in its entirety in plenary, on the understanding that the administrative, programme and budgetary aspects should be dealt with by the Fifth Committee.

At the same meeting, the Assembly took note of the clarification that in implementing resolution 58/316 to consider item 41 in its entirety in plenary, the relevant parts of chapter I of the report that are under agenda items already allocated to the Main Committees will be considered by the Committee concerned for final action by the General Assembly.

Under this item, the Assembly has before it the report of the Economic and Social Council (*A/60/3*). It is my understanding that an addendum to the report of the Economic and Social Council will be issued at a later date.

Under the same item, the Assembly also has before it a report of the Secretary-General (*A/60/114*) and two notes by the Secretary-General transmitting the report by the World Tourism Organization, circulated in document A/60/167, and the report of the Executive Director of the United Nations Population Fund (*A/60/397*).

I give the floor to the President of the Economic and Social Council, Mr. Munir Akram, to introduce the report of the Economic and Social Council.

Mr. Akram (Pakistan), President of the Economic and Social Council: Before I turn to the presentation of the report of the Economic and Social Council, may I, in my capacity as the Permanent Representative of Pakistan, thank you, Mr. President, for your words of sympathy and support expressed to the people and the Government of Pakistan in this hour of trial and tribulation. Undoubtedly, the disaster which we have experienced is unprecedented in its scale and devastation.

Even worse, we fear a second disaster looms for millions of destitute survivors and injured people unless help arrives before the winter. We are racing against time. As the Secretary-General has warned, if we do not step up our efforts for relief assistance, a massive second wave of deaths will happen. We are grateful for the support of the international community — from Governments, United Nations agencies, non-governmental organizations and private individuals. I understand that, in response to the United Nations South Asia earthquake 2005 flash appeal for $312 million, $60 million has been contributed so far and another $30 million pledged.

Mr. President, you have mentioned the high-level donors meeting tomorrow in Geneva, which will be attended by the Secretary-General. We look forward to high-level participation and generous support at that meeting.

We are confident that the international community will sustain its support and solidarity as we mobilize our efforts to save lives and subsequently to rehabilitate and reconstruct broken families and devastated homes and infrastructure. The Government of Pakistan, with the support of the international community and of its own people, will soon be turning to this task.

I would like to take this opportunity to inform colleagues that, following consultations, Pakistan will soon submit a draft resolution in the General Assembly regarding the earthquake disaster in South Asia, which has so devastatingly affected Pakistan.

Turning to the report of the Economic and Social Council, I have the honour and privilege of submitting it for the consideration of the General Assembly. The report is contained in document A/60/3 and A/60/3/Add.1, which will be issued subsequently.

Let me avail myself of this opportunity to present to the Assembly a brief overview of the Council's activities during this momentous year.

The Economic and Social Council substantive session for 2005 was deliberately conceptualized as a part of the preparations for the 2005 world summit. All segments of the session focused primarily on the theme of achieving the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Both at the spring meeting and during the substantive session, there was an encouragingly high level of participation and involvement from Governments, international institutions and civil society.

A key innovation introduced at this year's session was a segment on "voices against poverty". It provided a refreshing perspective on development by sending out the following four powerful messages.

First, the systemic basis for widespread poverty, symbolized by the unfair system of global trade and finance, remains, unfortunately, intact; secondly, economic growth and poverty eradication requires deliberate policies, inter alia to redress the phenomena of jobless growth; thirdly, the proliferation of conflicts has generated millions of refugees and internally displaced persons for whom the Millennium Development Goals are remote; and fourthly, the Economic and Social Council has a unique role in providing system-wide policy coherence and coordination.

Several other important messages were conveyed during the substantive session of the Economic and Social Council.

First, we are off track with respect to the achievement of most of the Millennium Development Goals in many countries. An accelerated and concerted effort is required to achieve the MDGs.

Secondly, the United Nations system has come together behind the MDGs. There is now a United Nations development agenda. But a fully integrated follow-up to realize the development goals adopted at various United Nations conferences has yet to emerge.

Thirdly, international development cooperation remains critical in enabling most developing countries to implement the United Nations development agenda.

Fourthly, security and development are inextricably linked. Without peace and stability, countries are not likely to achieve the development goals.

Fifthly, humanitarian emergencies are increasing and need to be addressed through a comprehensive and coordinated response.

Sixthly, there was a wide recognition of the central role that the Economic and Social Council can play in promoting the international development agenda. The Council should be strengthened to effectively fulfil its Charter mandate.

The Economic and Social Council had a rich discussion on how that could be achieved. Following that, specific proposals were developed, which I had the privilege of submitting to the preparatory process at the 2005 summit. The summit recognized the need for a more effective Economic and Social Council and took several decisions to enhance its role in five specific areas.

The first area is policy dialogue and implementation. The summit called upon the Economic and Social Council to promote global dialogue and partnership on global policies and trends and assess progress in the follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits. To that end, the Council should hold annual ministerial-level substantive reviews to assess progress, drawing on its functional and regional commissions and other international institutions, in accordance with their respective mandates.

The second area is the Economic and Social Council as a development cooperation forum. The Council should convene a biennial high-level development cooperation forum to review trends in international development cooperation policies and to promote greater coherence among the development activities of different entities and institutions.

The third area is coherence and coordination. The Council should play a major role in the overall coordination of funds, programmes and agencies, ensuring coherence among them and avoiding duplication of mandates and activities.

The fourth area is response to emergencies. The Council should also support and complement international efforts aimed at addressing humanitarian emergencies, including natural disasters, in order to

promote an improved, coordinated response from the United Nations. In that context, the Council will shortly convene two special events — on the food crisis in Africa and the threat of the avian flu — to activate the important role the Council can play in sensitizing the international community to existing or potential humanitarian emergencies.

The fifth area is peacebuilding. Based on the experience gained within the Economic and Social Council in the area of post-conflict reconstruction and development, the Council is expected to further promote a coordinated, coherent and integrated approach to post-conflict peacebuilding and reconstruction by interacting effectively with the peacebuilding commission.

A discussion of the Economic and Social Council's role in the follow-up to the decisions adopted at the 2005 summit was initiated at an informal summit meeting convened by the Council bureau on 15 September 2005. The meeting, chaired by the President of Pakistan, included the participation of several heads of State and Government; the heads of the International Monetary Fund, the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific; as well as senior ministerial representatives. A summary of the high-level discussion was circulated to all member States.

We will need further consideration of ways and means to ensure the implementation of the decisions of the 2005 summit to strengthen the Economic and Social Council. For that purpose, in my capacity as President of the Council, I have circulated a working paper, prepared after consultations with key delegations, country groupings and the Secretariat. The working paper offers a set of ideas and suggestions which, I hope, will provide a good basis for discussions in the General Assembly and lead to a consensus on ways and means to implement the 2005 summit decisions regarding the strengthening of the Council. I look to your leadership, Sir, in that endeavour.

In closing, I would like to stress that the Council's achievements this year could not have been possible without the excellent work of the Council's four Vice-Presidents, the ambassadors of Tunisia, Albania, Ecuador and Belgium. They carried a major part of the burden of work. I would also be remiss if I failed to recall the able and professional support of the Secretariat for the work of the Council. I express my sincere gratitude to all of them.

Mr. Oh (Republic of Korea): I thank the President of the Economic and Social Council, Ambassador Munir Akram of Pakistan, for introducing the comprehensive report of the Council for 2005, which details the whole range of its activities. I would also like to commend the Council's progress under Ambassador Akram's able leadership.

The Republic of Korea welcomes the reaffirmation, made by world leaders in September, of the Economic and Social Council's role as the principal body for coordination, policy review, policy dialogue and recommendations in the economic and social spheres. It is our view that the Council should be a forum for serious, high-level engagement by Member States on issues of economic and social development. In that regard, we support the annual ministerial meeting and biennial high-level development cooperation forum, which we believe can play meaningful roles in helping the international community to attain the Millennium Development Goals by 2015.

We also attach great importance to the recognition by world leaders that good governance is essential for sustained economic development and the eradication of hunger and extreme poverty. Today, I would like to focus on that fundamental issue, emphasizing the importance of reinventing Government and of building partnerships between the public and private sectors.

The world is changing at a pace perhaps unprecedented in history. States are striving to sustain progress towards development while coping with the new and ever-shifting economic and social challenges brought on by globalization, democratization, the information technology revolution and rapid socio-economic development.

The participants in the Sixth Global Forum on Reinventing Government, held in Seoul, Republic of Korea, from 24 to 27 May 2005, agreed that a comprehensive framework for participatory and transparent governance is necessary for sustainable social and economic development in which Government, business and civil society work together

to address challenges. Establishing such frameworks for governance will move us closer to achieving the Millennium Development Goals and other global development initiatives.

The outcome document of the Sixth Global Forum, known as the Seoul Declaration, provided specific recommendations for reinventing Government, sustaining social integration, improving corporate governance, enhancing local governance and increasing engagement with civil society. The participants recognized that, in order to improve State capacity and public services, Governments must cooperate closely with various social actors, fully incorporate information technology-based strategies, and conduct performance evaluations in all areas of Government activity. They also concluded that measures must be taken to alleviate economic injustice and the negative effects of the digital divide and to prevent and resolve internal conflicts. The participants also concluded that sustainable economic development is possible through the establishment of a free and fair market order. It is therefore necessary for domestic corporations to maintain good relations with the local communities in which they operate, while multinational corporations must uphold strict business ethics.

They agreed that decentralization is a key element of good governance. To make decentralization viable, local Governments must reinvent themselves to improve participation and transparency. In addition, the participants acknowledged the importance of a more active role for civil society in decision-making processes and the implementation of public policies, and agreed to seek new ways to strengthen global solidarity on various issues.

As a follow-up measure to the Sixth Global Forum, the participants welcomed the decision by the Republic of Korea and the United Nations to conduct a feasibility study for the establishment of a United Nations governance centre in Seoul. The Government of the Republic of Korea is doing its utmost to prepare for the establishment of the centre, which will provide a forum in which States can share their experiences in the areas of good governance, reinventing Government and fighting corruption.

Finally, the participants expressed their appreciation to the United Nations Secretariat for its hospitality in offering to host the Seventh Global Forum on Reinventing Government. It is my Government's hope that the Global Forum on Reinventing Government will continue to provide opportunities for the active exchange of ideas for and experiences in designing better Governments and better futures for all countries.

Having hosted the Sixth Global Forum on Reinventing Government, the current participatory Government of the Republic of Korea is now taking steps to embrace its recommendations as we continue to reinvent our own Government for the next level of socio-economic development. We recognize that innovation is a prerequisite for sustainable development. Our goal is to create a Government that is more service-oriented, transparent, efficient, decentralized and respectful of its citizens.

As we embark on that challenging process, there is a concern that we may fall into the all-too-common pattern of promoting ambitious Government innovations, only to fall back again soon after. To avoid that pitfall, we are pursuing sustainable innovation by adopting a systematic strategy and refraining from implementing one-time external shocks, such as restructuring and downsizing. We will let civil servants within the Government take the lead in recognizing opportunities for improvement and provide ample support within the system for the implementation of their innovative ideas. Through that approach, we intend to institutionalize the engine for innovation, manage the innovation process and reduce the resistance that can derail even the most well-intentioned reforms imposed by higher authorities.

The Ministry of Government Administration and Home Affairs, in charge of Government reinvention, has taken the lead in creating innovative organizational cultures and internalizing innovation in all Government agencies. Examples of such innovations include the reorganization of its departments into teams, the building of a performance management system based on a "balanced scorecard" method, and the introduction of a real-time customer-relations management system. The latter garnered much praise at the International Innovation Exhibition, a side event of the Sixth Global Forum. The Ministry has also created a Government innovation index that measures the innovation level and capacity of public institutions, and provides insight into weaknesses and barriers to innovation at each institution.

Another important endeavour is my Government's proactive effort to take advantage of advanced information technology infrastructure as a major tool for innovation. The Republic of Korea's level of e-Government was ranked fifth in the world this past year. By making our Government services and information widely accessible online, we can increase our citizens' satisfaction with administrative services while enhancing transparency, thereby improving public trust in Government institutions.

The Republic of Korea is committed to the fight against corruption and views it as an essential ingredient of Government reinvention in support of sustainable development. Accordingly, the Government of the Republic of Korea has been actively carrying out anti-corruption measures. In March this year, President Roh Moo-hyun and representatives of civil society and the public, private and political sectors signed the Korean Social Pact on Anti-Corruption and Transparency, in which all signatories pledged to fight corruption in their respective sectors. Through close cooperation between the Government and the private sector, we are witnessing a dramatic reduction in corruption and irregularities throughout Korean society.

While setting up comprehensive plans to fight corruption, we are preparing to ratify the United Nations Convention against Corruption as soon as possible. We would like to encourage Member States that are not signatories to the Convention to give positive consideration to signing, ratifying and implementing it.

Let me conclude by reaffirming the dedication of the Republic of Korea to participatory and transparent governance, both at home and throughout the international community.

Mr. O'Neill (United Kingdom): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union and those other European countries that align themselves with this statement.

May I begin, Sir, by echoing your words of sympathy and support to the people of Pakistan and other countries of South Asia in the light of the earthquake there. The European Commission and States members of the European Union have recently made several announcements of aid that we intend to provide and we look forward to taking part in the donor meeting tomorrow in Geneva to take forward that discussion.

I would like to speak briefly to welcome the report of the Economic and Social Council for 2005 and to thank the Ambassador of Pakistan, as the President of the Council, and his bureau colleagues for the work they have done this year and the leadership they have provided.

Over the last few months, the Economic and Social Council has made a major contribution to an important year for the United Nations. The spring meeting with the Bretton Woods institutions, the World Trade Organization and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development was an important part of the preparations for discussions on financing for development at the world summit in September.

At the Economic and Social Council's substantive session, discussion in the high-level and coordination segments on progress towards the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals, provided an essential contribution to the wider preparations for the summit in September.

In the operational segment, too, we did important work to take forward work to enhance United Nations operational activities in the wake of last year's triennial comprehensive policy review in the General Assembly.

In the humanitarian segment, we had important discussions on how to ensure more effective international responses to humanitarian disaster, including lessons from the Asian tsunami of a year ago.

We in the European Union particularly welcome the decisions that were reached at the world summit to enhance the Economic and Social Council's system-wide role in ensuring policy coherence and coordination. The Ambassador of Pakistan has already set out the main elements of that, and I will not go into the details here, but I would like to underline the strong commitment of the European Union to taking forward those decisions. We hope to see early progress under your leadership, Sir.

The European Union itself will bring forward proposals and comments for that discussion. We look forward to playing a part with all other members of the Assembly in the implementation of those important conclusions from the summit. We believe that the summit rightly recognized the vital role that the

Economic and Social Council has to play, and we hope to achieve progress as early as possibly to help ensure that.

Finally, I would close by saying that we look forward to taking part in the special events later this week and next week on the food crisis in Africa and avian flu.

Mr. Dapkiunas (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): I have the honour, on behalf of the delegation of Belarus, to thank the President of the Economic and Social Council, Ambassador Akram, for his professional and thorough organization of the Council's work this year. We believe the Council achieved significant success in all three key areas of its work this year: the consideration of thematic issues, preparations for the United Nations summit, and reform. In our view, that success constitutes an important step towards restoring the Council's central, coordinating role within the United Nations system in the area of international cooperation for development.

Despite the fact that the ministerial declaration of the high-level segment was not adopted, we thought that the outcome still had positive aspects, because the intensive work done at the Council's substantive session made it possible to quickly identify the most complex and pressing areas of conflict, thus facilitating preparations for the 2005 High-level Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly.

The Economic and Social Council's special high-level meeting on financing for development was enhanced by the participation of leading officials of the Bretton Woods institutions, the World Trade Organization and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. The meeting established a good basis for subsequent consideration of the problem of financing for development in the framework of the General Assembly.

We welcome the important decisions adopted at the Council's substantive session to make further progress towards the reform of United Nations humanitarian mechanisms and to improve the operational activities for development of the United Nations system.

This year's session marked an important stage in the establishment of innovative United Nations bodies such as the ad hoc advisory groups of the Economic and Social Council on countries emerging from armed conflict. Through those groups, a basis has been laid for the Council's effective support of the activities of the Peacebuilding Commission.

Thanks to the systematic work on formulating optimum reform measures, for the first time in many years a number of important concrete measures for structural changes in the work of the Economic and Social Council were included in the report of the Secretary-General and in the outcome document of the summit (*resolution 60/1*). Belarus maintains its strong support for those innovative ideas.

Belarus also favours the adoption, following ministerial meetings, of resolutions or declarations that are more significant in both practical and political terms. We also support retaining the practice of annual thematic discussions at the ministerial level on the most pressing social, economic, humanitarian and ecological problems.

We express our appreciation of the notes of the Council President, Mr. Akram, of 19 October, which contained proposals for the implementation of those provisions. We believe that they form a good basis for the implementation of decisions adopted during the summit. We call upon Member States to consider them as quickly as possible in the format of open and informal consultations.

Mr. Hannesson (Iceland): I would like to begin by thanking Ambassador Munir Akram, President of the Economic and Social Council, for introducing the report of the Economic and Social Council for 2005 (*A/60/3*), which provides a comprehensive overview of the Council's work. This year, Iceland was elected to the Council and is honoured to take part in its important work. I would like to thank the President and the four Vice-Presidents of the Council and its secretariat for their excellent work and professional leadership in the extensive work of the Council during its various segments, which the report for 2005 so aptly describes.

Iceland aligns itself with the statement just made by the representative of the United Kingdom on behalf of the European Union. I will limit my brief statement to just one issue.

A wide range of key issues were addressed by the Economic and Social Council, and we have heard about them from previous speakers. They are all worthy of further deliberations here today. I shall speak

very briefly on Council resolution 2005/31, on mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system. I believe that by adopting that resolution, the United Nations is creating a good precedent that should encourage all Member States to mainstream a gender perspective into their own policies, thereby advancing gender equality.

The reason I am limiting my short statement to that issue is the fact that yesterday Icelandic society came to a standstill, as Icelandic women staged a general walkout to mark the anniversary of their walkout 30 years ago. We are distributing the prepared text, and I will not read it. I hope members enjoy it.

Mr. Makayat-Safouesse (Congo) (*spoke in French*): My delegation associates itself with the statement to be made by Jamaica on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

At the outset, I want to recognize the quality of the report submitted by the President of the Economic and Social Council, Mr. Munir Akram, Permanent Representative of Pakistan (*A/60/3*).

In this age of globalization, the coordinated efforts and concerted action of all actors to implement the global development aims that we have set ourselves are becoming ever more necessary. In that regard, under the presidency of Mr. Munir Akram, Permanent Representative of Pakistan — whose dynamism and efficacy I wish to salute — the Economic and Social Council has pursued efforts to fulfil its increasingly crucial mandate with regard to the challenges it faces.

This year again, through the links that have been established over many years with the international financial institutions, the Council provided a framework for the promotion of coherent and coordinated international cooperation on the occasion of the 2005 world summit. Through the various issues raised in our debates at the meeting in April and the substantive session, the Council made a significant contribution to the evaluation of our commitments and towards launching our consideration of the implementation of the Millennium Declaration, the Monterrey Consensus and many other international commitments.

The key issue now is how to provide follow-up to the movement launched at the 2005 September summit in order to meet the expectations of developing countries, in particular in sub-Saharan Africa, where achievements in poverty reduction remain modest. That is made clear in the 2005 United Nations report on the Millennium Development Goals, which notes, inter alia, that half of all children under the age of five are malnourished; that fewer than two thirds of children attend primary school; and that, despite modest progress in some countries, women remain inadequately represented in decision-making bodies. In turn, while the mortality rate for children under the age of five has fallen, significant progress has yet to be registered. Malaria still kills 90 per cent of those it infects, while the AIDS pandemic is claiming an ever growing number of victims.

In view of the situation, the Economic and Social Council has a crucial role to play, as previously outlined by the Secretary-General in his report "In larger freedom". The outcome document adopted by our heads of State and Government at the 2005 summit sets out specific guidelines with regard to our future actions. The Economic and Social Council must be made more effective and active in order to ensure its capacity to implement decisions. By creating a reinvigorated and strengthened Council, we will restore the dynamism necessary to the implementation of all our commitments to sustainable development and to taking the concerns of the developing world into account.

Ms. Bai Yongjie (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): At the outset, I wish to convey our deep sympathy to Pakistan and other South Asian nations for their suffering as a result of the recent earthquake. We will do our best to help them overcome that tragedy and to rebuild their lives.

I also thank the President of the Economic and Social Council, Ambassador Akram, for his introduction of the report. Given the Council's work and its important role in the United Nations system with regard to economic development, I wish to make the following points on items 41, 46 and 44.

We are glad to note that the Economic and Social Council has recently carried out effective work in the economic and social fields, and held full discussions on a number of related major issues, laying a solid foundation for the success of this year's summit. At this year's substantive meeting, the Council held many round-table meetings on the Millennium Development Goals and invited experts to participate in panel

discussions on working methods within the United Nations system and on the experiences and lessons of the Indian Ocean earthquake and tsunami. The Council's discussions have thus become more substantive and pragmatic. Earlier, it also conducted preparatory meetings for the high-level segment and its spring dialogue with the Bretton Woods institutions, the World Trade Organization and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. Those meetings and discussions have served vigorously to mobilize the attention and political will of all parties on development issues and to foster consensus on international development cooperation, all of which contributed to the United Nations summit. We wish to express our appreciation to Ambassador Akram, President of the Economic and Social Council, and other members of the bureau for their pioneering spirit and leadership.

The outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields have come to constitute the Organization's development agenda. The recent High-level Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly reaffirmed relevant international agreements and national commitments, sparking the enthusiasm of all parties for fulfilling internationally agreed development goals. The development section of the summit demonstrated once again that development is a unified and comprehensive concept, with various interrelated and mutually reinforcing factors and requiring comprehensive and balanced consideration and actions. The purpose of the integrated and coordinated implementation of the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences is to focus on interlinkages among conferences, mobilize various forces, and promote more effective implementation. It has been proved over the past few years that the biggest problem in follow-up activities is the huge gap between words and actions. The summit has provided us with an important opportunity by setting out a road map for the international community. It is essential for all countries and social sectors to act jointly, plan comprehensively, advance steadily, and contribute their due share.

First, achieving development involves a multi-level and complex process, and the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits cannot be realized overnight. It is necessary to define key areas and set priorities so as to mobilize maximum resources and achieve the optimum distribution of forces and the most desirable results. Thanks to the joint efforts of all countries, the Millennium Development Goals have received worldwide recognition and extensive support, and their significance has been officially confirmed by the United Nations summits. We should now focus our attention on the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals as the first step towards the realization of all relevant development goals.

Secondly, action at the national level is a pivotal link in the integrated and coordinated implementation of the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits. There is a wide spectrum of national conditions. Only by combining the consensus achieved at international conferences with their specific national conditions can countries truly claim ownership and action be undertaken realistically and effectively. National Governments have the responsibility to incorporate various international consensuses into their national development strategies and make them an organic part of their own development programmes. Constructive dialogue should be encouraged at the regional and international levels, thus contributing to the exchange of experiences, the stimulation of new thought, and the better mobilization of resources and technical means to support the coordinated implementation of development strategies at the national level.

Thirdly, the United Nations, as the chief promoter of integrated and coordinated follow-up to the outcomes of its major conferences, should vigorously mobilize all social sectors and encourage them to offer ideas and resources. If the Organization is to maintain its due leadership, its relevant meetings need to be endowed with pragmatic and effective agendas and develop innovative working methods. Related policy discussions should specify concrete policies, expand consensus and identify shortcomings and weaknesses so as to better mobilize and coordinate international action. There should be better communication and coordination among organizations and agencies to ensure policy coherence and avoid contradictions and duplication. In actual practice, countries can define the themes for exchanges and dialogues on major issues at various intervals. In order to encourage worldwide attention and the extensive involvement of all social sectors, meeting arrangements should be more flexible and diversified. The good momentum created during

the preparation for the 2005 summit should be maintained. The United Nations Millennium Project reports have evoked a strong global response. The Project's working mechanism, research and recommendations should be fully utilized.

Fourthly, effective global action needs corresponding organizational backing. The Economic and Social Council, as the main organ of the United Nations system to promote economic and social development, has special advantages in pushing for the implementation of internationally agreed development goals. The outcome document of the 2005 summit requests the Council to hold annual ministerial meetings, review progress in implementing related internationally agreed development goals, strengthen inter-agency coordination, and respond to the new development challenges. In order to fulfil those important missions, the Council needs to make the necessary adjustments, improve its allocation of resources and manpower, and reform its working methods. We hope that it will make good use of this opportunity to reinforce its coordinating functions and establish an integrated review mechanism on the basis of the reviews undertaken by the functional commissions and other agencies on the progress of various conferences and summits.

Fifthly, integrated and coordinated implementation calls for integrated and coordinated supervision. Currently, many agencies, both within and outside the United Nations system, are evaluating progress achieved on the related development goals within their own specific fields, with limited impact. We call for the establishment of a unified and comprehensive framework, led by the United Nations, for evaluating progress in the implementation of internationally agreed development goals. It would both appraise national progress and oversee and evaluate international cooperation and development aid. Though such a framework, countries can be urged to fulfil their pledges and joint efforts can be made towards achieving internationally agreed development goals.

As regards the special session on children, we welcome achievements made in recent years by national Governments, agencies and non-governmental organizations in implementing the programme of action. The advancement of the cause of children is an important benchmark of social and economic development and human progress. The Chinese Government has made it a consistent policy to adhere to the principle of "children first" and fully to guarantee children's rights to live and grow up under protection and to participate. On the basis of the fundamental principles of China's Constitution, the Chinese Government began to build a legal system to protect the rights and interests of children in the 1980s.

To fulfil the commitments it undertook at the special session on children, the Chinese Government has in recent years vigorously implemented the Chinese Child Development Programme and provided the necessary human, financial and material resources to promote children's causes. At present on mainland China, all provinces, 97.7 per cent of prefectures and 99.5 per cent of counties have formulated local development programmes for children. China has also formulated a number of policies, rules and regulations offering powerful legal guarantees of protection for poor and vulnerable children and the removal of development and gender inequalities.

Naturally, as the world's largest developing country, China still faces many challenges in the promotion of children's causes. The Chinese Government will continue to make tireless efforts to seek solutions to child-related issues and is ready to actively participate in international cooperation in that field so as to further advance children's causes and enable the children of the world to enjoy a bright and promising future.

This year marks the tenth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women. At its forty-ninth session, the Commission on the Status of Women comprehensively evaluated the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Programme of Action and the outcome document of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly on women, and adopted a commemorative declaration. As the host of the Fourth World Conference on Women, the Chinese Government has also held a commemorative meeting, and the declaration adopted at that meeting has been circulated as a document for this session. We hope that, through the concerted action of all countries, efforts to achieve gender equality and to protect the rights and interests of women and children will be further advanced.

Mr. Neil (Jamaica): First of all, let me apologize for my tardiness in reaching the General Assembly this afternoon. I was delayed in the Fifth Committee,

dealing with the item on the budget for the biennium 2006-2007.

The Group of 77 and China joins in expressing our solidarity with the people of Pakistan and the other nations of South Asia that were affected by the recent devastating earthquake. We also emphasize that the needs are enormous and urgent, and should receive the substantial support of the international community.

On behalf of the Group of 77 and China, I wish to make some general comments on the report of the Economic and Social Council for 2005. We examined the report against the background of what has been an eventful year in the Council. We especially want to recognize the dynamic leadership of the President of the Council, Ambassador Munir Akram, and his bureau in guiding the work of the Council in 2005. His leadership brought an innovative spirit to and invigorated the work of the Council during the year.

The year has been a significant one for the Economic and Social Council. Many of the activities undertaken were geared towards providing the necessary inputs for the High-level Plenary Meeting held in September. Almost all the discussions in the Council had as their central theme the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals. From the outset, therefore, there was a conscious attempt to bring focused discussion on the many critical issues of importance to the wider international community.

I will draw attention to aspects of the Council's work that were of particular importance to the Group of 77 and China.

First, as to the annual spring meeting of the Economic and Social Council with the Bretton Woods institutions, the World Trade Organization and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, we see great value in the opportunity to engage those institutions, whose policies have a direct impact on development. It is for that reason that we should think of ways to expand the scope of the deliberations beyond the current format. The Council must be better able to facilitate networking in the development system and to provide greater oversight in global economic decision-making. We should think of ways to strengthen the outcome of the dialogue and to expand the discussions beyond the time frame that is currently allotted.

The other important aspect of the work of the Council to which I would like to refer is its substantive session, held in June and July. We are disappointed that the only outcome of the high-level segment this year is a mere summary of the deliberations. We recognize the difficulties involved, but we would have wanted a more substantive recognition of the many useful ideas and proposals that were discussed over the three-day period. There were, for example, very constructive ideas on current trends and developments in the world economy, on the eradication of hunger and poverty, and on employment creation. Unfortunately, none of those could be reflected in a consensus document for adoption by our ministers. We hope that that situation will not be repeated in the future.

We must all work to strengthen the Council, and a simple indication of our willingness to do so should be our ability to ensure that the outcome of the high-level segment is more than a mere summary of the discussions that have taken place. It must fully capture and reflect our unswerving commitment to implementing the obligations that we are called upon to fulfil.

The humanitarian affairs segment continues to merit special attention in order to address humanitarian emergencies, including natural disasters. The devastation wrought on the developed and the developing countries alike as a result of natural disasters is a significant feature of the current year. For developing countries, the magnitude of the destruction is even more dramatic, with significant loss of life and damaged property. The recent earthquake in South Asia and the continual ravages of hurricanes and tropical storms in the Caribbean and Central America demonstrate the urgency with which action has to be taken. Special economic humanitarian and disaster-relief assistance, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 46/182 of 16 December 1991, has to be given the utmost priority in the work of the Council, with due regard for the primary role of the affected State in the organization and delivery of humanitarian assistance.

Those disasters demonstrate the need to strengthen system-wide coherence and to urgently implement the worldwide early warning system that was called for in the 2005 Hyogo Declaration and Framework for Action. Greater attention also needs to be given to establishing predictable funding, especially for neglected emergencies, and to reduce the gap in

terms of resource needs for emergency assistance and for aid to development.

I turn briefly to the general segment. As is customary, that segment commanded the most attention in terms of time and energy, given the volume of work to be covered during its duration. It represents an important arena through which a myriad of issues, particularly those related to the work of the functional commissions, can be considered. The real value of the general segment was sometimes lost in the attempt to ensure that the many agenda items to be addressed under the segment were completed within the stipulated time frame. As we contemplate how best to adapt the working methods of the Council to the needs of the present global environment, special consideration will have to be given to how best to use the general segment to provide better coordination and oversight of the subsidiary bodies of the Council.

One issue which we had hoped could have been reflected in this year's report of the Council concerns the situation in the Maldives. We are close to the first anniversary of the earthquake and tsunami that wreaked havoc in the Indian Ocean and the littoral States, yet the Council has not been able to take a decision to support the request of the Government of the Maldives for a delay in its transition from least developed status, made as a result of the devastation to that country arising from the tsunami. The Group of 77 and China will continue to seek an early decision on that matter.

The High-level Plenary Meeting agreed on the areas in which the role of the Economic and Social Council should be strengthened. We are now charged with identifying the most appropriate modalities to ensure that its role in its areas of competence can be strengthened. We are particularly interested in proposals to make the Council more integrally involved in policy dialogue and implementation, as well as in the promotion of development cooperation. They provide an important basis on which we can begin to expand the Council's system-wide coordination for development cooperation, as currently carried out under the operational activities segment, and to better advance the implementation of the development agenda by strengthening the link between the normative and operational aspects.

At this juncture, I should like to highlight three important issues that should guide any future work of the Council. First, with respect to preserving the intergovernmental process, we have long maintained that the Council should be given a more prominent role in advancing social and economic development. We acknowledge that civil society has an important contribution to make to the process, and while we continue to encourage such efforts, we urge that they do not compromise the primary role of Member States in the overall process.

Secondly, as we move towards better integration and coordination of the implementation of the outcomes emanating from major United Nations conferences and summits, we must be mindful of preserving the integrity of each of the respective processes. That is critical in advancing the implementation of commitments.

Thirdly, the organization of the work of the Council should allow for greater flexibility and enable the Council to consider and take action on development issues as they arise. Thematic discussions and policy issues, analysis of trends in the global economy, and reaction to emergencies should be possible within a more flexible work programme of the Council.

The Group of 77 and China stand ready to lend their full support in future discussions aimed at elaborating the new functions assigned to the Economic and Social Council. We understand that additional information will be provided next month, detailing the financial implications of those new undertakings. It is our hope that we will not allow the issue of financing to deter us from taking much-needed action in strengthening the Council. We expect that equal attention will be given to all aspects of the system as we move towards the reform and revitalization of the entire United Nations.

Mr. Karanja (Kenya): I take this opportunity, on behalf of my delegation, to congratulate you, Sir, on the able manner in which you are guiding the deliberations of this important sixtieth session of the General Assembly. My delegation also wishes to associate itself with the statement made by Jamaica on behalf of the Group of 77 and China on the Economic and Social Council's 2005 report under consideration, as well as with the sentiments of solidarity expressed with the victims of the disaster in Pakistan and neighbouring countries.

May I also congratulate Ambassador Munir Akram, President of the Economic and Social Council,

and the entire Council bureau on their dedication and hard work in ensuring that the Council remains focused and delivers on its mandates.

As regards the work of the Economic and Social Council during its 2005 substantive session, I wish to observe that it provided an important basis for this year's world summit and the ongoing deliberations of the General Assembly. The theme of the 2005 Council session — "Achieving the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration, as well as implementing the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summit: progress made, challenges and opportunities" — was indeed in tune with the critical development issues at the centre of international debate.

It is noteworthy that, during the 2005 session of the Council, delegations agreed that the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals remained elusive in many countries, especially in Africa. In spite of the numerous plans and strategies that have been put in place by many countries, implementation has proved difficult due to a number of limitations that include inadequate resources.

We in Kenya have made attempts in a number of areas, such as education, health and infrastructure. The full implementation of the Millennium Development Goals and other internationally agreed development goals will require the concerted efforts of the international community through financial, technical and human resource support. It is in that light that we call for the creation of international partnerships that can facilitate the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals.

Mr. Hamidon (Malaysia), Vice-President, took the Chair.

My delegation appreciates the fact that the Economic and Social Council emphasized the importance of fighting HIV/AIDS and endorsed an integrated approach that includes prevention, treatment, care, support and research. While underscoring the devastating effects of the HIV/AIDS pandemic on society, particularly the productive sections of the population, I wish to note that we in Kenya have taken steps towards prevention, sensitization and cure of the HIV/AIDS victims. The Government is working with various partners in the health sector and the infection rate has drastically dropped from over 14 per cent to about 6 per cent within the last three years.

Environmental protection is an important factor in the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals, poverty eradication and other internationally agreed goals. International environmental governance is an integral part of realizing sustainable development. While Kenya supports the ongoing process of defining the elements of international environmental governance, my delegation is of the view that it should be done within the framework of the Cartagena decision, which aims at strengthening the United Nations Environment Programme, within its current mandate, through enhanced financial and scientific bases.

Environmental protection cannot be complete without adequately addressing the issue of forest management. Forests and trees play a critical role in supporting the livelihoods of people, particularly the world's poor. Further sustainable forest management could contribute to developing economies in many ways through the provision of income, employment creation, and the fulfilment of health needs and food security. My delegation therefore calls upon the United Nations system to embrace forest management as critical to environmental management and sustainable development.

My delegation further believes that the deliberations at the Economic and Social Council's 2005 coordination, operational activities and humanitarian affairs segments, if given proper consideration, can add immense value to the performance of the United Nations system. The deliberations at the 2005 session highlighted key challenges and opportunities in the endeavours to implement the Millennium Development Goals and the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits. We therefore need to build on the consensus that emerged in order to make a difference.

Some of the issues that emerged that require attention include the understanding that the Millennium Development Goals and other major outcomes of key United Nations conferences and summits constitute a comprehensive development agenda for the international community, and that the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and other internationally agreed goals has been uneven in terms of both the goals and the regions. With due

respect for those challenges, my delegation appreciates the fact that the international community has shown a new spirit of shared responsibility in moving ahead with the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals and other internationally agreed objectives.

Under the coordination segment of the Economic and Social Council session, the contribution of the United Nations system towards the follow-up and implementation of the internationally agreed development goals was reviewed. Ways and means of improving the Council's coordination functions were discussed. My delegation fully supports the recommendations that were made towards improving the way the United Nations system works in relation to achieving the Millennium Development Goals. In particular, we recommend that efforts be made to enhance the link between the United Nations agencies and regional commissions in the field, to distinguish between coordination and integration functions in the field, and to adopt a multi-year programme for the coordination segment.

In addition, it is our hope that the theme of the 2006 coordination segment — "Sustained economic growth for social development, including the eradication of poverty and hunger" — will generate discussions that will add value to the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals.

My delegation recognizes that the United Nations has a unique capacity and opportunity to provide neutral and flexible support to countries in their struggle to implement the Millennium Development Goals and other internationally agreed goals. That uniqueness is enshrined in its power to engage various stakeholders at the country level, its distinctive advocacy role, and its analytical capacity on complex social and economic issues. It is in that regard that my delegation supports the need to strengthen and integrate the operational activities of the United Nations system.

In harmonizing the operational activities of the United Nations system in the field, it is important that consideration be given to either merging or reducing United Nations agencies. That can go a long way towards presenting a unified image of the United Nations through all its operations in the field.

At its 2005 session, the Economic and Social Council exchanged views on the transition from relief to development and on issues of special economic, humanitarian and disaster relief assistance. In light of the increasing humanitarian and disaster assistance requirements occasioned by natural disasters, it is important for the United Nations to review its approach and preparedness in handling the same. My delegation therefore supports the need, among other things, to establish reliable funding mechanisms, including through the consolidated appeals process and the improvement of the Central Emergency Revolving Fund by including a grant facility component, as was proposed during the deliberations of the Economic and Social Council.

Mr. Aghazadeh (Islamic Republic of Iran): May I start by associating my delegation with the statement made by the Ambassador of Jamaica on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

Sixty years after the adoption of the United Nations Charter, the role and mandate of the Economic and Social Council remain more relevant than ever before. The Council still plays a major and vital role in dialogue, coordination, cooperation and policy-making in the economic and social fields. At this juncture, numerous old and emerging challenges are before us. Many internationally agreed goals and targets, including the Millennium Development Goals, are supposed to be met by 2015.

Lack of coordination and cooperation and even failure in a few areas could make our efforts fruitless and prevent the achievement of the MDGs as planned. There are certain commitments enshrined in the outcomes of regional and international agreements that deserve action and implementation. The current situation and the need for progress to be monitored by an appropriate forum show how critical and decisive the work of the Council will be in the years ahead in tackling the challenges. The Economic and Social Council should therefore be strengthened so that it can address adequately and comprehensively all of the parameters involved in development.

The reform of the Economic and Social Council in the early 1990s, with the creation of various segments, helped the international community to categorize the main mandates of the Council and, in that context, to address global challenges in a more effective and efficient manner. Fortunately, the role of the Economic and Social Council as enshrined in the Charter was recently reaffirmed in the Summit Outcome document. That

document recognized the need for a more effective Economic and Social Council, as the principal body for policy dialogue, policy review, coherence, coordination, development cooperation, emergency response and recommendations on issues relating to economic and social development. The document also recognized the role of the Council in implementing the international development goals agreed at the major United Nations summits and conferences, including the Millennium Development Goals.

My delegation believes that, in order to make the required progress in implementation of the MDGs, the Council should, as a matter of priority, review trends in international development cooperation at the envisaged biennial high-level Development Cooperation Forum, in accordance with paragraph 155 of the outcome document.

National reports on progress made, reports of the United Nations regional commissions and relevant international organizations, and a comprehensive and analytical report on the basis of those reports, as well as high-level representation and active participation by Member States and heads of international organizations, could provide a basis for assessing progress and identifying gaps and constraints at each meeting of the Forum.

Having experienced a great many high-level gatherings and forums, both inside and outside the United Nations system, I can say that participation and exchanges of views alone will be insufficient to enable us to reach the goals within the envisaged time frame. A strong will for cooperation and implementation on the part of the politicians will certainly be needed. Coherence and coordination should not be limited to bodies affiliated with the United Nations. The international financial institutions, including the Bretton Woods institutions, should adapt themselves to the trends and policies set out in the General Assembly, which enjoys global membership and has a democratic decision-making process.

The implementation of the commitment of the developed countries to allocating 0.7 per cent of their gross national product to official development assistance by 2015 and the establishment of a timetable for that commitment by those countries that have not yet done so will be key to the success of the Economic and Social Council in fulfilling its mandates.

We appreciate the role of the Economic and Social Council in mitigating the impact of natural disasters and coordinating the humanitarian response so far, but much remains to be done in terms of preparedness and strengthening the international humanitarian response to natural disasters. As members are aware, the devastating impact of the growing number of natural disasters is inflicting considerable and unexpected damage on the affected countries. With each occurrence, a significant portion of the available human and financial resources is diverted from development to relief and recovery efforts. The international community in general, and the Economic and Social Council in particular, should address natural disasters in such a way that efforts to meet the MDGs are not drastically affected. The Maldives is an example of a country that was deprived of graduation from least-developed-country status, despite long-standing development activities, as a result of the tsunami that took place last year in the Indian Ocean. That showed how vulnerable the developing countries are vis-à-vis natural disasters and highlighted their growing need for attention from the international community.

In conclusion, the politicization of economic and social development through the use of unilateral coercive policies and measures continues to hamper international efforts for the creation of a favourable environment for development and the eradication of poverty at the national and global levels. There should be changes to and improvements in the way we view global problems and their causes. We firmly believe that the universal recognition of development as a right, together with a sincere commitment to efforts for its achievement, will significantly contribute to poverty eradication and better standards of living, and thereby to the maintenance of peace and security throughout the world.

Mr. Atiyanto (Indonesia): Our delegation joins the President and other representatives in expressing our deep solidarity with and sympathy for the peoples and the Governments of Pakistan, India and Afghanistan, which have been severely affected by the recent earthquake. Indonesia joins other members of the international community in expressing our continued readiness to ease the burden of our brothers and sisters in Pakistan, as well as in India and Afghanistan.

There is no question that the Economic and Social Council plays a vital role in coordinating the implementation of international development goals agreed at major United Nations international conferences and summits in the economic and social fields. That is evident from the report of the Economic and Social Council on its work in 2005, as contained in document A/60/3. My delegation would like to sincerely thank Ambassador Munir Akram for having introduced the report of the Economic and Social Council for 2005. In this regard, my delegation also shares the views of the Permanent Representative of Jamaica, who spoke on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

The 2005 world summit opened a new window of opportunity for strengthening the role and function of the Economic and Social Council in coordination, policy review and the provision of recommendations on issues relating to economic and social development. In this regard, the additional responsibilities assigned to the Economic and Social Council should made it more effective and responsive to various development challenges.

In light of the expanded mandate of the Economic and Social Council, my delegation sees the need to identify modalities that will facilitate its implementation. In doing so, the President of the General Assembly, together with the President of the Economic and Social Council, should arrange the necessary consultations to obtain support from all Member States.

Once again, it is of paramount importance that such consultations always be conducted in an open, transparent and inclusive manner. It is also critical that those consultations consider the relations between the Economic and Social Council, the General Assembly and the Security Council in accordance with the United Nations Charter.

The 2005 world summit has further endorsed the mandate of the Economic and Social Council to stay engaged with all stakeholders at the national, regional and global levels. We hope that such engagement would focus on practical and action-oriented outcomes, especially to support developing countries in achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

We also highly value the role of the Economic and Social Council in supporting and complementing national, regional and global efforts to address humanitarian emergencies, as in the case of natural disasters. That would require flexibility in the Council's programme of work to meet and to make recommendations for emergency situations. In that regard, coordination between the Economic and Social Council and its functional and regional commissions, United Nations funds and programmes, and national Governments, is indispensable.

We also must not lose sight of the important role of the Council's secretariat. In our view it needs to be strengthened to provide deeper analytical and administrative support for the substantive deliberations of the Council.

Mr. Chulkov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Allow me to take this opportunity to again express our condolences to the people of Pakistan and to other countries victims of this shattering earthquake. Like many other countries, Russia immediately sent its experts, doctors, special equipment and field hospitals to provide humanitarian assistance to the afflicted regions. Allow me to express our confidence that at tomorrow's international conference in Geneva, the international community will once again show its support to the people who have suffered from the earthquake.

The Russian Federation is pleased with the results of the work of the Economic and Social Council this year. In our view, the Council has reaffirmed its role as the central body for the discussion of development issues and as the key coordinating body for the work of the United Nations system in socio-economic and environmental areas.

The Council's substantive session, as well as its preparatory phase, made important contributions to the preparations for the 2005 summit. Although Member States were unable to agree on a draft ministerial declaration for the high-level segment of the session, the negotiations on the subject were, in our view, extremely useful. They allowed for detailed discussions on a broad range of issues on the socio-economic agenda of the summit and helped to clarify the positions of Member States, including on the most sensitive issues, leading to agreement on many elements which then formed the basis for subsequent discussions.

We also approve of the work of the operational and humanitarian segments of the session. It is of the greatest importance that the decisions adopted there

allowed for progress in determining the competencies of the General Assembly as the body that establishes political, system-wide directions, and the Economic and Social Council as the organ that coordinates their implementation within the framework of the United Nations system.

We welcome the strengthening and enhancement of the interaction between the Economic and Social Council and the international financial and commercial institutions. The practice of holding annual high-level meetings of the Council, the Bretton Woods institutions, the World Trade Organization and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development has again demonstrated its usefulness and must be continued, taking into account the prerogatives, mandates and modalities for decision-making in all of the institutions involved.

Important work this year also included the informal discussion on the reform of the Economic and Social Council. Although there were divergent positions, a common understanding of mutually acceptable elements was reached, which made it possible for the Council to develop a block of decisions for the outcome document. Here we would like to note the leadership role in that area and in organizing the work of the Council of the President of the Economic and Social Council this year, the Permanent Representative of Pakistan, Mr. Munir Akram.

The ideas put forward in the outcome document of the 2005 world summit regarding the Economic and Social Council create the potential for strengthening the political significance, the role and the effectiveness of the Council. At the core of our work must be the establishment through the Council of a forum for cooperation for development and for carrying out ministerial assessments of progress in implementing the results of the major United Nations conferences and summits. We support the holding of such a forum on a biannual basis as part of the high-level segment of the Council's substantive session, in light of the need for strict compliance with the balance between New York and Geneva.

It is extremely important to reach a common understanding among Member States regarding the ministerial assessments of progress in implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The decision of the summit on this issue must not result in a cumbersome new process that needs a lot of time and a great many resources to monitor compliance by countries with the goals agreed on the international level. That would duplicate existing mechanisms — such as individual processes for implementing the results of United Nations conferences and summits — or instruments such as national reports on implementation of the MDGs. We also find inadmissible the revival, in the guise of implementing a decision of the summit, of the idea of holding peer reviews.

On the whole, the summit decisions presuppose implementation of reform steps within the main parameters of the present format of the work of the Economic and Social Council. We are aware of the possibility for further enhancing the effectiveness of the Council's work, for example, through optimizing the agenda of the substantive segment of the session.

However, we are opposed to a radical review of the format and working methods of the Economic and Social Council, which would go beyond implementation of the decisions of the summit. There can be no possibility for dividing the Council's substantive session or for reducing its length, or for the establishment within the Council of executive committees or management groups which are not provided for under the existing rules of procedure.

The optimum format for discussing specific modalities for the implementation of the summit's decisions on the Economic and Social Council is, in our view, to work within the framework of the organizational and, when necessary, the substantive session of the Council itself in 2006.

This does not, however, mean that informal discussion must definitely be postponed until next year. We have read with interest the working documents recently distributed by the Permanent Representative of Pakistan, which contain a number of specific initiatives for the implementation of the decisions of the summit regarding the Economic and Social Council. We are ready to participate actively in the informal meeting of the Council proposed therein for an exchange of views on this subject and for the establishment of a basis for future work in that area.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item. The Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 41.

Agenda item 7 (*continued*)

Organization of work, adoption of the agenda and allocation of items

Second report of the General Committee (A/60/250/Add.1)

The Acting President: I should like to draw the attention of representatives to the second report of the General Committee contained in document A/60/250/Add.1. In the first paragraph of the report, the General Committee recommends to the General Assembly that the item entitled "Observer Status for the Hague Conference on Private International Law in the General Assembly" be included in the agenda of the current session under section I, Organizational, Administrative and Other Matters. May I take it that the General Assembly decides to include this item in the agenda of the current session under section I?

It was so decided.

The Acting President: The General Committee further recommends that the item be allocated to the Sixth Committee. May I take it that the General Assembly decides to allocate this item to the Sixth Committee?

It was so decided.

The Acting President: I should like to inform members that the item entitled "Observer Status for the Hague Conference on Private International Law in the General Assembly" becomes item 158 on the agenda of the current session. The Chairman of the Sixth Committee will be informed of the decision just taken by the General Assembly.

Agenda items 46 and 44

Integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields

Note by the Secretary-General (A/60/275)

Follow-up to the outcome of the special session on children

Report of the Secretary-General (A/60/207)

The Acting President: The General Assembly will now consider, in a joint debate, agenda item 46, "Integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields," and agenda item 44, "Follow-up to the outcome of the special session on children". In connection with agenda item 46, the Assembly has before it a note by the Secretary-General transmitting his updated report on the role of the Economic and Social Council in the integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits, circulated in document A/60/275.

Under agenda item 44, the Assembly has before it a report of the Secretary-General circulated in document A/60/207.

Mr. Neil: (Jamaica): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, under agenda item 46, "Integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields".

I wish to thank the Secretary-General for the reports submitted for our consideration. We look forward to future discussions on the various reports. Some of the issues of concern to the Group of 77 and China were highlighted during the recently concluded substantive session of the Economic and Social Council. I wish now only to highlight some points that should be taken into account in our further consideration of this item.

First, the integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of major United Nations conferences and summits requires that all relevant United Nations entities review their priorities and programmes in accordance with the relevant provisions of the relevant outcomes. We hope to receive more details on concrete actions already taken to support the implementation of the decisions, especially those related to development, that were adopted at the High-level Plenary Meeting, which concluded recently. We believe that the Secretariat has an important role to play at the technical level in ensuring that resource flows to developing countries are facilitated. Timely assistance in the adoption of country-level strategies and programmes and in the

identification of funding sources will also be very critical.

We therefore anticipate very active participation by the Secretariat in monitoring the release of donor resources and in supporting measures for greater aid effectiveness. Equally, at the level of policies, we expect continuous review of how global economic policies to support development are reflected in the commitments given at the summit and previous conferences.

We recognize that efforts will have to be made to bring those entities not directly under the jurisdiction of the United Nations into the discourse on how best to mainstream development in their respective policies and strategies. We understand that this will be the main focus of the next meeting of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination, scheduled for 20 and 29 October.

At the same time, we would like to highlight one area of concern. In the ongoing work to be undertaken by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the relevant funds and programmes, the Chief Executive Board and the United Nations Development Group, adequate oversight arrangements will have to be in place to ensure that the activities are monitored at the inter-Governmental level. For the Group of 77 and China, it is imperative that the outcome of Secretariat deliberations in the field of development should be appropriately reviewed and considered by Member States.

With regard to management reform issues, we will be awaiting the Secretary-General's proposals on a range of issues for consideration in the Fifth Committee. The approach of the Group of 77 and China will be to assess those proposals on their merits as reforms aimed at improving the efficiency and performance of the Organization in the interests of all States. We intend to do so carefully and objectively, regardless of the pressures to satisfy particular interests. The position of the Group of 77 and China will continue to be determined on that basis.

That is the end of the statement on behalf of the Group of 77 and China on agenda item 46.

I should now like to make a statement on behalf of Jamaica on agenda item 46, "Follow-up to the outcome of the special session on children", in my capacity as the Permanent Representative of Jamaica.

Three years have passed since the General Assembly adopted its decision to work towards "A world fit for children" (*resolution S-27/2*). The Assembly's assessment of implementation of the commitments made on that occasion is taking place in the context of the coordinated follow-up to the major United Nations conferences and summits. That is most appropriate because mutually reinforcing global development agendas seek to ensure the protection of children's interests in a comprehensive and coordinated manner.

In her recent presentation in the Third Committee, the representative of UNICEF identified some of the challenges facing the implementation of critical programmes for children. Among them are weaknesses in institutional capacity, budgetary constraints and the existence of conflict and instability. She also identified some of the possible ways forward: the establishment of high-level national councils for children, capacity-building to strengthen national child agencies and collaboration with parliamentarians and civil society organizations to promote child-focused budgets. We concur with that assessment.

Implementation of the commitments of "A world fit for children" is among the national priorities of Jamaica. Our support for that outcome document is one of a number of initiatives to which we are committed in order to promote and protect the welfare of children. We have ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict. Our involvement and leadership at the regional level includes the hosting of the 2000 regional conference on children, which adopted the Kingston Consensus.

The outcome document "A world fit for children" called for the development of action plans for children. In that regard, the Government of Jamaica has established a national plan of action as an institutional framework for addressing and enforcing children's rights. To complement that action plan, domestic legislation in the area of children's rights has been enacted, the most important of which is the landmark Child Care and Protection Act, adopted in 2004.

Shortly after the special session, the Child Development Agency, headed by the first Ambassador for Children, was established. The Agency was given the responsibility of achieving the holistic development of children through the creation, implementation,

coordination and regulation of programmes and policies aimed at fulfilling Jamaica's obligations. The Child Development Agency is also working on public education, social mobilization and community outreach in order to help citizens understand what their responsibilities are and to equip them to be better parents, among other things.

In addition, the Agency has adopted a multisectoral approach in developing policies that relate to and affect children. They include the national plan of action on children, the national plan of action on child labour and the new policy framework for street children.

The Government of Jamaica has undertaken to achieve the minimum targets relating to reducing infant and maternal mortality and has made significant strides in that area over the past few years. It has effectively reduced severe and moderate malnutrition among children under five years and has an extensive, ongoing immunization programme. Additionally, access to safe drinking water has been improved.

The Government is committed to providing quality education, providing free, compulsory education at the primary level.

With a view to implementing a comprehensive policy to counter violence against children and protect their rights, a child-specific national human rights institution has been established. Other initiatives include the establishment of a juvenile unit in the police force, as well as a victim support unit in the Ministry of National Security to assist child victims of violent crimes.

We remain fully committed to the goal of combating HIV/AIDS, but significant challenges remain. We are pleased that, as a result of the provision of anti-retroviral drugs to more women, there has been some progress in reducing the rate of mother-to-child transmission. But, while we note the success in that area, we remain concerned about the rate of new infections among women and, in particular, young girls. That means that the battle continues and that there is need for an injection of even greater resources to achieve our target of reducing the proportion of infected infants by 20 per cent by 2005 and by 50 per cent by 2010. The need for adequate resources is critical to support the political commitment that is already assured.

We commend the role of UNICEF in helping the country meet its national objectives, particularly in the area of the fight against HIV/AIDS, in response to the rising number of cases of children orphaned by the disease.

In all our efforts, we are committed to the involvement of non-governmental organizations and civil society, which we believe can play a useful role in monitoring the State's implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

We owe it to our children to provide them with a safe haven fit for them to inhabit as they make their transit into adulthood. My Government remains fully committed to achieving that.

Ms. Kidwai (India): At the outset, please allow me to thank you, Sir, for this opportunity to express our views on the critical task before us, namely, the implementation of and the follow-up to the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic and social fields, in particular, the decisions of the 2005 World Summit. We believe that effective follow-up to and implementation of decisions is often as important as the decisions themselves, and we therefore take the task before us seriously.

The 2005 World Summit Outcome (*resolution 60/1*) included a number of key decisions designed to improve the functioning and performance of the United Nations. Those included, inter alia, a commitment by all Governments to achieve the Millennium Development Goals by 2015; the establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission and the Human Rights Council in a time-bound manner; the conclusion of a comprehensive convention on international terrorism; the strengthening of the United Nations oversight capacity; the scaling-up of the international community's response to infectious diseases and other emerging health challenges; support for early reform of the Security Council; and agreement on the deletion of anachronistic references to "enemy States" in the Charter.

At the same time, much of the work initiated by the preparatory reports of the United Nations reform process has been left incomplete. There is a need for the United Nations to provide direction on issues such as debt cancellation, the achievement of official development assistance targets, foreign direct investment flows, the transfer of resources and environmentally-friendly technology to facilitate

sustainable development and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. The World Summit Outcome reflects agreement to work expeditiously towards implementing the development dimensions of the Doha Work Programme but did not provide clear, comprehensive political direction to the World Trade Organization's Doha Round. Such direction could set the stage for the success of the Hong Kong Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization to be held in December 2005. The growing impasse shows that such political direction is needed. We need to rectify that situation.

For satisfactory progress on United Nations reform, the question of distribution of economic and political power in the United Nations, including in the Security Council, also needs to be addressed. As the Secretary-General has stated, no reform of the United Nations can be complete without reform of the Security Council.

The President of the General Assembly has attached utmost importance to the follow-up to, and implementation of, development issues in the 2005 World Summit Outcome. He has stressed the need for political momentum on development to be maintained and strengthened. He also pointed out that the United Nations, in particular, had to play its part in ensuring that the international community has in place appropriate ways and means to achieve the timely and full realization of the Millennium Development Goals.

He noted that the General Assembly's ongoing work had to include items such as the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), HIV/AIDS, migration and arrangements for reviewing the implementation of the Monterrey Consensus, and that the outcome document had invited the Secretariat to undertake work on system-wide coherence this year, with the aim of improving the way United Nations development, humanitarian and environment activities were managed and coordinated. We agree with the approach taken by the President of the General Assembly to the work that lies ahead, particularly as concerns follow-up to the development aspects of the outcome document.

The main purpose of the 2005 world summit was to review the implementation of the Millennium Declaration. Unfortunately, most countries will not be able to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), given their current levels of growth and the level of international support they are receiving. Efforts have to be made at both the national and international levels to reach the targets set. While both the Millennium Declaration and the outcome document have spoken of exploiting the beneficial aspects of globalization, agreement on and implementation of the modalities is still lacking. Making the process of globalization fairer and more equitable remains one of the main challenges of our time. One achievement made by the G-77 was progress on systemic issues critical for good international economic governance. That progress has to be built upon.

Monitoring the progress made in the implementation of MDG 8 by developed countries is an integral part of the monitoring of the MDGs as a whole. Therefore, country-level reports by developed countries with regard to progress on commitments to developing countries remains important. It is essential to ensure that commitments to provide additional resources are implemented without delay. We also believe that debt stock cancellation should be complemented by sharp increases in official development assistance, in keeping with the Monterrey Consensus. The outcome document, in the context of commitments and initiatives aimed at enhancing resources for the development agenda, recognized the progress made on the Innovative Financing Framework for Immunization (IFFI). Operationalizing the IFFI is particularly important, since frontloading aid will enable many recipient countries to overcome the initial bottleneck in pursuing the MDGs.

However, no implementation scheme should obscure the fundamental objective, namely the rapid economic growth of developing countries so as to enable them to meet the MDG targets, especially with regard to reducing poverty and increasing employment. The implementation of the agreements contained in the outcome document should lead to the creation of a more favourable international economic environment that would be more supportive of development efforts.

The 2005 World Summit Outcome document has given impetus to the development of a strong counter-terrorism agenda. In accordance with the outcome of the world summit, our priority must remain the conclusion and adoption of a comprehensive convention on international terrorism early in this session of the General Assembly. We welcome the Secretary-General's offer to make available to the General Assembly an updated version of the element

of his previous strategy, and we would be happy to lend our full support towards the adoption of a counter-terrorism strategy after the comprehensive convention is adopted.

We also appreciate the formation of a counter-terrorism implementation force and the Secretary-General's plan to submit proposals by early 2006 to the Security Council and to the General Assembly to strengthen the capacity of the United Nations system to assist States in combating terrorism and to enhance coordination. We caution against duplication of work and mandates, given the plethora of bodies that are currently engaged in this exercise in the Security Council and elsewhere in the United Nations system.

To overcome the marginalization of the developing countries, their empowerment through reform of the Security Council remains imperative. India will continue to work with like-minded countries to reach the broadest possible agreement for an expansion of the permanent and non-permanent categories, to respect deadlines, and to bring the reform process to an early and successful conclusion.

India looks forward to working with the President of the General Assembly in his efforts to complete work on the other unfinished reform agenda, as contained in the outcome document. This includes working through informal consultations of the plenary on the Peacebuilding Commission and the Human Rights Council. India welcomes the establishment of the Commission and hopes that it can begin its work before 31 December 2005. We also support negotiations with a view to concluding, during the early part of the sixtieth session of the General Assembly, work on establishing a Human Rights Council.

The doubling of the regular budgetary resources of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) should respond to the broad mandate of human rights, especially in augmenting capacity-building and offering greater technical assistance to Member States at their request. The activities of the Office in the area of greater country engagement should not automatically result in an increase in its personnel deployments — rather, it should focus on improving the institutional capabilities of the country concerned. The interaction of the OHCHR with other relevant United Nations bodies should be coordinated in order to mainstream all human rights, including the right to development. The activities and programmes of the OHCHR should address, in a balanced manner, not only civil and political rights but also economic, social and cultural rights. Additional resources should also be used judiciously to streamline reporting procedures and extend technical assistance to Member States for capacity-building.

We note from the report that the United Nations Development Group will finalize the strategy and work plan on strengthening the role of the United Nations special representatives, resident coordinators and humanitarian coordinators, and resident coordinator and country-based coordination systems by January 2006. A report on progress will be provided in the Secretary-General's annual report to the Economic and Social Council in 2006. We look forward to examining that report. We also expect the Secretary-General to apprise Member States of the next set of operational reforms to further strengthen the management and coordination of United Nations operational activities.

The 2005 World Summit Outcome called for the General Assembly and other relevant organs to review all mandates older than five years and take decisions based on that review during 2006. The expectation expressed in the Secretary-General's report (*A/60/430*) that all relevant organs and specialized intergovernmental bodies of the United Nations will complete that review in time for action in the first quarter of 2006 seems overly optimistic. That report also states that the resulting strategic framework for the forthcoming biennium will be submitted to the Committee for Programme and Coordination in August/September 2006. We assume that an additional session of the Committee is being proposed, since that Committee has not taken any decision on postponing its substantive session from June/July 2006.

We welcome the urgency with which the issue of strengthening the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) is being treated. However, in the haste to carry out the recommendations of the outcome document, it would be a pity if we were not to seek the views of OIOS itself on the areas that require strengthening and on the extent of reform.

We are also puzzled to note that a separate, independent external evaluation of the Office is contemplated, something which was not mandated by the outcome document. That document states quite clearly that the external evaluation will focus on the

entire auditing and oversight system of the United Nations and specialized agencies in the context of the comprehensive review of the governance arrangements. We do not believe that a piecemeal approach such as that proposed has any merit. We also look forward to receiving proposals from the Secretary-General on the other aspects of management and Secretariat reform as mandated in the outcome document.

We have carefully examined the report of the Secretary-General containing the third update on progress made in follow-up to the Assembly's special session on children (*A/60/207*). We agree that most of the goals of "A world fit for children" (*resolution S-27/2, annex*) will be achieved only through a greater intensification of action for disadvantaged children and families throughout the world. Examples of rapid progress in individual countries and regions have demonstrated that accelerated progress is possible, but current efforts need to be expanded and better supported through resource allocations.

Mr. Hasan Malek (Malaysia): On behalf of the Malaysian delegation, I wish to thank the Secretary-General for his report containing the third update on progress made in follow-up to the special session of the General Assembly on children (*A/60/207*). We are pleased to note that Governments are taking substantive measures to pursue the goals aimed at creating a world fit for children, as envisaged in the Declaration and Plan of Action adopted at the special session of May 2002 (*resolution S-27/2, annex*).

The outcome document of the special session on children focused especially on promoting healthy lives, providing quality education, protecting children against abuse, exploitation and violence, and combating HIV/AIDS. While considerable progress has been achieved in certain areas, setbacks have occurred in others. We note the assessment in the Secretary-General's report that while by 2004 many countries had taken concrete actions to translate the commitments made at the 2002 special session into national action plans and policies, the overall rate of progress had been uneven. We are heartened to note that the situation now seems to be more encouraging.

While a clear and genuine effort is being made to strengthen partnerships within the international community to improve child survival and promote healthy lives, much remains to be done to achieve the targets set under the Millennium Development Goals. Similarly, greater efforts are required to promote the other goals set at the special session, namely, providing quality education, protecting against abuse, exploitation and violence, and combating HIV/AIDS.

Some of the obstacles to achieving the goals contained in the outcome documents of the world summit and the special session on children include the lack of resources, debt and the decline in international funding to implement identified programmes. Those are clearly development issues and have to be addressed if we are honest in our conviction to further the promotion and the protection of the rights of children.

In that regard, my delegation commends the invaluable support and commitment demonstrated by the relevant United Nations development agencies in their activities to assist and support Member States in implementing the policies, plans and programmes proposed by the special session's Plan of Action. We urge the relevant United Nations agencies to continue their efforts to assist developing countries in establishing and strengthening their national capacities and institutions for the promotion and the protection of the rights of children and to achieve the goals set at the special session on children. Malaysia continues to participate in some of those efforts at the regional and multilateral levels.

At the national level, many of our efforts have been carried out in the context of our second National Plan of Action on Children for the period 2001 to 2020. The Plan, whose theme is caring for the children of Malaysia, was formulated in conformity with the nation's vision of achieving the status of a fully developed nation by 2020 and implementing the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and of the outcome document of the special session on children. The Plan sets out a broad framework of actions and measures to address all areas of concern affecting on social and developmental needs, as well as the protection of the rights of children.

Since our independence, Malaysia has consistently made a conscious effort to make quality education the cornerstone of the national agenda. The national education policy is oriented towards providing basic education for a minimum of nine years. Girls and boys have equal access to educational opportunities, with the enrolment rates for the two genders almost at par —

50.4 per cent of boys and 49.6 per cent of girls — except at the level of tertiary education, where girls have a higher rate of enrolment.

Having put in place educational facilities throughout the country for the disabled, the Government has now made primary education compulsory for all.

With a rate of 98 per cent enrolment in primary school, the Government has now moved a step further by embarking on the provision of quality education to ensure that children have access to the best system of instruction to enable them to cope with the rapid progress of the information age. Efforts in this regard include modernizing schools, providing well-trained teachers and equipping all schools with computer laboratories and information and communications technology equipment.

To promote healthy lives, Malaysia is constantly upgrading its medical facilities and programmes and has allocated 1.3 billion Malaysian dollars for this purpose in the 2006 national budget. There has been a steady decline in maternal and neonatal mortality in Malaysia, which currently stand at 0.2 and 5 per 1,000, respectively. Health and community clinics set up throughout the country, which provide services such as immunization and normal development assessment for children, ensure that the child is in optimum health.

Malaysia is committed to the concept of total rehabilitation for disabled children. This entails a multidisciplinary approach whereby the Department of Social Welfare provides rehabilitation services for disabled children through institutional services, with the Ministry of Health providing technical inputs. The Department has also forged small partnerships with non-governmental organizations by supporting them financially in the administration and management of the institutional centres they operate.

Concerning the protection of children against abuse, exploitation and violence, Malaysia's Child Act 2001, formulated in line with the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, sets out provisions for the care and protection of children. A court for children has been established, which allows the affected child to participate in discussions and deliberations in court. In the area of child abuse, Malaysia has developed mechanisms for child protection, care and rehabilitation by setting up intersectoral Suspected Child Abuse and Neglect teams at district and state hospitals. A milestone in preventive measures is the establishment of child protection teams, which are involved in multiple programmes run by the community and for the community. Among other things, they run parental education activities and serve as counselling centres.

Having identified action against commercial sexual exploitation and trafficking of children as one of the priorities in the region, Malaysia is mindful that this challenge cannot be surmounted by any single country acting alone. In this regard, Malaysia subscribes to the Declaration on the Commitments for Children, adopted in 2001 by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). Under this Declaration, ASEAN has drawn up cooperation programmes in the areas of child trafficking, child prostitution and intercountry adoption. At the same time, programmes have been put in place to provide alternative family care arrangements for the victims of child abuse, neglect and exploitation, as well as to address the special needs of children with disabilities.

Recognizing the devastating impact of HIV/AIDS, which poses serious health and developmental challenges to humankind and which disproportionately affects the young, Malaysia gives serious attention to combating HIV/AIDS. Although the reported cases of HIV infection are relatively few compared to our population, the Malaysian Government continues to give serious attention to measures for combating HIV/AIDS. The Government has taken a comprehensive and integrated approach to deal with this problem, which includes preventive measures, care, support and treatment for those infected and affected by HIV/AIDS. In that regard, the Malaysian Government also works very closely with non-governmental organizations.

Malaysia believes that the well-being of children and women is a reliable indicator of a healthy society and of good governance. In this respect, the Malaysian Government will continue to promote and facilitate the rights of the child, especially in the areas of protection, development and participation, and to create a favourable and enabling environment towards the goal of a world truly fit for children.

Mr. Soe (Myanmar): Sir, may I first of all say how happy I am to see you, current Chairman of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), presiding over this important meeting. My delegation

fully associates itself with the statement made by the Ambassador of Jamaica on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. I shall therefore confine my statement mainly to agenda item 44, follow-up to the outcome of the special session on children.

Three years ago, the special session of the General Assembly on children adopted a Declaration and Plan of Action entitled "A World Fit for Children". Since then, the international community has come together to protect and promote the cause of children. But we cannot be complacent. According to the Human Development Report of the United Nations Development Programme, every hour of the day, over 1,200 children die around the world, most because of a preventable disease called poverty.

Five years ago, the leaders of the world adopted a comprehensive and detailed set of human development objectives — the Millennium Development Goals. The strong focus of the Millennium Declaration on the lives of children gives added impetus towards attainment of a world fit for children and has led to the convergence of national planning processes around a common set of goals. Both the Millennium Development Goals and "A World Fit for Children" aim to reduce infant and under-five mortality rates by two thirds by 2015. Presently, only a few countries are on track to attain those goals. The Human Development Report 2005 projects that if current trends continue, this goal will be achieved only in 2045.

In an era of globalization, when technology, trade and investment have advanced dramatically, it is disturbing that 6 million children die annually of diseases that could be prevented or effectively treated. They die because simple yet high-impact and cost-effective interventions that could prevent their deaths remain beyond the reach of their families, particularly in the developing world. Effective national action complemented by sustained assistance from the international community is needed to reverse that trend.

In Myanmar, we are making great efforts to promote the health of the children. Under-five mortality rates have dropped from 130 deaths per 1,000 live births in 1990 to 66.6 per 1,000 live births in 2003. We aspire to reach the target of 38.5 deaths per 1,000 live births by 2015. The decline in prenatal, infant and child mortality rates during the past two decades is the result of the implementation of the national health plan, which provides increased access to primary health care, increased immunization coverage, promotes oral rehydration therapy and emphasizes the Making Pregnancy Safer initiative as a high-priority component of the reproductive health strategy.

Access to safe drinking water and sanitation also has an important bearing on child mortality rates. In Myanmar, a safe drinking water supply programme for water-scarce rural areas has been carried out for years and will continue. According to multiple indicator cluster surveys, access to safe drinking water has increased from 32 per cent of the population in 1992 to 72 per cent in 2000. Access to improved sanitation has also increased during the same period, from 36 to 83 per cent.

In today's world of abundance, it is regrettable that more than 1 billion people survive on less than $1 a day, 208 million of whom are youth. While increased official development assistance is an effective tool for fighting poverty, solutions also need to be found for improving market access for developing countries. Unfair and unbalanced trade rules greatly hamper efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the goals set out in "A world fit for children" (*resolution S-27/2, annex*).

In Myanmar, as part of our efforts to achieve economic growth and social progress in line with the MDGs, three national development programmes are being implemented to achieve balanced development and to narrow the socio-economic development gap existing between rural and urban areas. The three programmes are the border area development programme, the 24 special development zones plan and the integrated rural development plan.

We believe that education is the key to progress and poverty alleviation. In Myanmar, to achieve the goal of universal primary education, we have implemented Education for All activities since the 1996-1997 academic year. In accordance with the Dakar Education for All goals, a national plan of action was drawn up in 2003. As a result of such efforts, the school enrolment rate of children five years and older in the academic year 2004-2005 was 96.56 per cent, the net primary school enrolment rate was 84.5 per cent and the primary school completion rate was 74.5 per cent. The number of primary, middle and high schools has increased from some 34,000 in 1992 to more than 40,000 in 2004. Efforts have also been made

to improve the quality of education. The reform of the official curriculum and assessment methodology has been undertaken, and the use of information and communication technology is strongly encouraged.

The border areas of Myanmar have lagged behind in development due to decades of armed insurgency, which led to the absence of an effective education infrastructure and created barriers to education. The lack of education opportunities resulted in more violence, creating a vicious cycle. Today, that cycle has been broken. Because of the Government's national reconciliation efforts, 17 armed insurgent groups have now returned to the legal fold. Now that peace and stability have returned to the border areas, the Government has been able to provide education for the children residing there. Fifteen years ago, there were a mere 28 schools in the border areas of Myanmar; today there are 790 schools, with more than 120,000 children currently enrolled.

In an effort to ensure that no child is left behind, two nationalities youth resource development degree colleges affiliated with major universities have been established. There are also 27 training schools for the development of nationalities youth from border areas. Nineteen domestic science vocational training schools for girls and women have been established in the border areas, and more than 14,000 girls and women have benefited from the vocational training provided in those schools.

Since the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS (S-26/2, annex) was adopted, there has been stronger leadership at all levels, and new resources have been mobilized. The global commitment is unprecedented. However, greater efforts are needed if the international community is to halt and reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS by 2015.

Where HIV/AIDS is declining, it is primarily because young people have learned to practice safe behaviour. In Myanmar, life skills training and social development for youth is conducted by the national AIDS programme in coordination with national non-governmental organizations. In collaboration with UNICEF, the Ministry of Education developed a school-based healthy living and AIDS prevention education kit in 1997. Since then, the programme has been adopted as part of the official curriculum and is taught at all levels, starting at the primary level. The programme has also been expanded to key groups outside the formal education system.

In today's interconnected world, assistance to developing countries to fight HIV/AIDS is not just a moral imperative but an investment for a common future. HIV/AIDS poses a serious challenge to the global community and it is a challenge that can be successfully addressed only through the cooperative efforts of the entire international community.

I conclude by reiterating Myanmar's firm commitment to the goals set by the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic and social fields. Myanmar stands ready to work together with others in the international community to implement them. By fulfilling those common goals, we will also be creating a world fit for children.

Programme of work

The Acting President: I wish to advise members that the informal consultations on the Peacebuilding Commission, which were announced for tomorrow afternoon, are postponed to a later date. The time and venue of those consultations will be announced shortly.

Next, I wish to inform members that at 9.45 a.m. on Thursday, 27 October, there will be a meeting of the General Committee to consider a request by Spain for the inclusion of an additional agenda item, circulated in document A/60/233.

I also wish to inform members that at the request of the sponsors, the joint consideration of agenda item 11, the role of diamonds in fuelling conflict, and agenda item 12, the prevention of armed conflict, originally scheduled as the second item for Monday, 31 October, will be postponed to a later date, to be announced.

The meeting rose at 6.00 p.m.